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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
MONDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2007

In Today's Papers

PM Erdogan's Plan to Bring PKK Members Back Home
Hurriyet, Milliyet, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman and others: While en route from the EU-Africa Summit in Lisbon, PM Erdogan spoke to journalists about his plan to bring PKK members down from the mountains. Radikal and Milliyet quote Erdogan saying that "earlier we passed a law concerning the terrorists, but it had only limited benefit. As you know, there was resistance and defensiveness at that time. Now, we are at a very different point. We can achieve better results with the support of the media. With this new effort, we can minimize, and even stop, people from going up into the mountains. And we can also bring them down from mountains. We are not bargaining with anyone. We will say 'this is the law, come and surrender.' A new law could be issued. We will exert efforts in order to get the best results." When Erdogan was asked whether the military was aware of this new initiative, he said "of course, we are working on this plan with the Turkish Military." Saturday's Zaman based on Erdogan's comments, reported that has signaled that the government will pass a new 'repentance' law.

The opposition reacted harshly to the PM's new plan. Main opposition party CHP leader Deniz Baykal said that the government "seeks a compromise with terrorists" and noted that "any weakness in the fight against terrorism would have a serious cost. Issuance of such a law would be political ignorance and would be a basic mistake." While addressing his party's rally in Izmir, MHP leader Devlet Bahceli criticized PM Erdogan by saying "such a repentance law would mean pardoning the murderers of our martyrs and innocent people. Prime Minister, stop playing with fire."

NGO Initiative for a Civilian Constitution
Radikal reports that the Constitution Platform Initiative National Workshop, organized by NGOs including TOBB, TISK, Turk-Is, Kamu-Sen and TUSIAD, convened over the weekend. The workshop issued the following proposals: the new constitution characterize economic stability as a duty of the state and should contain provisions that stress a functioning market economy. The workshop also discussed

judiciary, legislative and administrative issues that should be covered in the constitution.

Jurists Rally in Ankara

All papers and TV channels: Over ten thousand lawyers and members of the judiciary protested at a rally held in Tandoğan square in Ankara. The title of the rally was "Independent Judiciary." Eighty-one provincial bar presidents, members of judges' and prosecutors' unions, law professors and many citizens attended the rally. The rally protested a new law which allows the government to be directly involved in the interviewing and hiring of the judiciary, thereby - according to the protestors - politicizing the judiciary.

EDITORIAL OPINION: Iran

"Nothing Can Be Achieved Unless Israel Becomes Part of the Process" Semih Idiz commented in the mainstream daily Milliyet (12/10): "The NIE report is not only a hot topic on the international agenda; it also caused a fury in Israel. The report makes it very difficult to validate an argument in favor of a strike against Iran. It even makes it hard to justify diplomatic pressure on Iran. Israel's objection to this report is understandable. In fact, the stranger thing is the attitude of Washington. The Bush administration is trying to defame an important assessment that was produced by its own intelligence units. Former UN representative John Bolton even accused American intelligence units for organizing a coup against the Bush administration. As part of US diplomatic efforts, IAEA Ambassador Greg Shulte called me from Vienna. Ambassador Shulte emphasized that the NEI report demonstrates the fact that Iran, despite all of its denials, had a nuclear weapons program until four years ago. He added that Iran still had the option to produce

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nuclear weapons while recalling that Iran resumed its uranium enrichment program. In return, I asked about Israel's nuclear activities because Washington's efforts are doomed to fail unless this issue is properly addressed. Israel refuses to be a part of the NPT and does not allow inspection of its nuclear program. Unless this attitude is changed, we cannot expect regional countries to listen to the US. Ambassador Shulte, refraining from direct pronouncement of Israel by name, said that 'the US wants the Middle East entirely free from nuclear weapons. Realistically speaking, in order to reach that goal, the Middle East problem should be resolved first.' I believe that the nuclear weapons issue is one of the fundamentals of the Middle East problem and both Iran and Israel should be pressured for the sake of Middle East peace. If the desire to prevent nuclear proliferation in this region is sincere, this is the key to this problem."

"Olive Branch to Iran?"

Omer Taspınar wrote in the leftist daily Taraf (12/10): "One fact should not be missed on the Iran-NIE: The Bush administration is not happy with the NIE report for obvious reasons, but it did not try to hide the report from the public. This attitude calls for the re-evaluation of prejudices about the Bush administration, and about America in general. All of this shows that the country is ruled with democracy and has a free press. The rulers feel accountable to the public and press. Where do we put 'imperialism' in all of this?

Evidently, despite our anti-American sentiments from the left to the right, democracy and imperialism are not compatible with each other. The US, despite its setbacks, is a democratic country and cannot be really imperialistic even if it wants to be. By making the NIE report public, the White House's plans for a strike against Iran have completely failed. From now on, it is almost impossible for the Bush administration to pursue harsh policies against Iran. President Bush is unlikely to get any support from Western allies, except for Israel. In sum, US imperialism is the loser and democracy is the winner. If Democrats win the next elections, we might even expect to see Washington present an olive branch to Tehran."

TV News:
NTV

Domestic News

The Turkish General Staff (TGS) will organize a symposium at their Central Officers Club in Ankara on Tuesday on 'cutting off ideological and economic support for the PKK.'

When the Istanbul governor did not give permission for a DTP rally, DTP supporters, some heard chanting pro-PKK slogans, organized illegal demonstrations in Kucukcekmece, Okmeydani and Gazi Mahallesi districts in Istanbul.

International News

Iranian President Ahmedinejad plans to visit Turkey, but the date has not been determined yet.

Russian media reported that their Strategic Missile Forces have successfully tested an intercontinental ballistic missile.

WILSON